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July. 9. 1905.

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CORLEARS HOOK IN 1820
THE WAGNERIAN CULT, AND
OUR MANNERS

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1820
THE WAGNERIAN CULT,
AND
OUR MANNERS

BY
RUSH C. HAWKINS

J. W. BOUTON
TEN WEST TWENTY-EIGHTH STREET
NEW YORK
1904



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3/17/84

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THE LITERARY COLLECTOR PRESS
GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT

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victions.

APOLOGY

NEARLY half a century ago I spent the better part of a beautiful spring Sunday with Erastus Dow Palmer, a man of correct taste, a charming companion and talented sculptor, in walking through the streets of Albany, searching outside of nature for a thing of beauty. We were not particular about the kind of a thing provided it had about it a little of beauty—in reality a little of the truly beautiful.

But what a hopelessly useless undertaking it was! We saw the churches, public edifices, schools, dwellings, stores, shops, and other erections of the usual order, or rather disorder; and found only size and quantity. Quality was entirely wanting, and the whole reached the dead level of the unimaginative and tasteless commonplace.

After a rather thorough going over of the town, we came out of our search at the lower

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end of the principal street, and halted in front of a new banking house building just completed. It bore evidence—outward signification—of interior use. It was solid and honestly constructed, without the usual zinc or wood cornice painted and sprinkled with sand to represent stone; and was adorned with only a small amount of ornamentation executed in fairly good taste.

While contemplating the new found wonder, my friend said to me: "What do you think of the day's work—how many buildings have we seen which from an architectural point of view ought to exist?"

The answer was: "Fruitless, unsatisfactory, and but one."

"What proportion of the people, in your opinion, ought to be professional grumblers?"

"About one in ten might find enough to do to keep the other nine in order."

"You are all wrong, the proportion should be the other way—ten to one instead of one in ten."

I accepted his opinion, and ever since have tried to do my duty, faithfully, as one of the ~~the~~ ten.

R. C. H.

CORLEARS HOOK IN 1820

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IN the good old days before the unscrupulous grasping foreigners had taken possession of the trades and the retail business of New York, and the Irish had contracted with themselves and their Church for its misgovernment and the handing it over, tongue-tied, type-muffled, and bound hand and foot, to the powers of Popery, for jobbery and robbery, it was a pleasant place for human abode. It was Christian without being puritanic; its inhabitants were active in politics without being corrupt, and the laws for the protection of life and property were as honestly administered as elsewhere. Of course, those who know human nature will understand that, even in those primitive days, a hundred thousand, or two hundred thousand, or more, of the superior animal could not be brought together and exist in a condition altogether Arcadian. Their habits of business and social

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intercourse had to be of the human sort. The knowledge that a policeman's club was near at hand ready for use, then, as now, had its share of potent influence in protecting the property of one Christian from the ravages of another of the same faith. But it may be safely contended that there was not as much work for the club, per capita, then as now. Notwithstanding the unpleasant conditions which always obtain, and often govern, where a large number of men and women are brought together, the New York of those days was a pleasant city to live in.

Possibly there might have been some little attempt at class distinction; but, if at all effectual, the lines were so intangibly drawn as to be almost imperceptible. Probably those who styled themselves the "Uppers" were, chiefly, the descendants of the early Dutch. They could not have been particularly open in their declarations of superior social position, for the reason that a large majority of them were still engaged in small occupations, the leading characteristics of which would not have furnished pictorial material for aristocratic heraldic quarterings. If we only knew the facts, no doubt truth would compel us to acknowledge that not one in a hundred of those plodding Dutch

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traders, in a small way, ever dreamed that within a hundred years he or any of his kind would be catalogued as being the founder of "one of the old Knickerbocker families of New York." At that time the active propagation of the "American Old Family" idea, since so wonderfully pushed, was quite unknown. The rule was to let the present work
v guild up the character of the individual doing it, and not to waste time in writing and talking about the great value of an ancestry that never existed.

Scattered throughout the State, with branches in the cities, there were a few families of Anglo-Saxon descent who had performed honorable service for the State and bore unblemished records for personal integrity; but they were not numerous enough to constitute a class, and, in their relations to society, were not regarded as an existing class by themselves. From this brief summary of social conditions the reader might be led to believe that the New York of the last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, in its general features, was, to say the least, devoid of color. Such, however, was not the fact.

For several decades before the close of what may be designated as the reputable period of

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its history, there had grown up a distinctive industrial middle class, descendants from the English, Scotch and Protestant Irish, which was strongly marked by a new set of characteristics previously unknown outside of the Puritan class in New England. These New Yorkers had the sterling virtues of the Eastern first settlers without their sombre demeanor and religious intolerance. They were honest, industrious, and proud of their respective occupations; and, as mechanics of skill, were never happier than when "turning out an honest job" for a reasonable compensation. The thought of taking advantage of the ignorance of a customer, and cheating him either as to quantity or quality, was not to be thought of.

As late as 1850 the "American Mechanic of New York" was a title to be proud of; and, as a rule, he was independent and "carried his head high." He often boasted of his calling, and was ever ready to state openly and boldly his utter detestation of the deceitful and unfaithful methods of foreigners, who, by their double dealing, were beginning to cheapen the reputation of the honorable American workman.

This class, to a man, was patriotic to the core, believed in George Washington, Paul

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Jones, and the American Constitution, and had the history of the "Glorious Revolution" at their fingers' ends. In their intercourse with others, they were good-natured, kindly, and jocose, returning joke for joke, and always ready to engage in disputations concerning the topics of the day. In relation to one matter they were bitterly intolerant. They had inherited from their ancestors an intense, ardent, and deep-seated detestation of Popery. They had no use for the Romish Hierarchy or for those who believed in it, and would tolerate no fellowship with them. In all affairs of everyday life they drew the line so as to exclude contact with Papists, and long before the first native American demonstration came to the surface, they had coined the battle cry of "America for Americans," and fought for it on many a bloody field. These men were of the period of honesty and manly courage, before the Roman Catholic Irish and the Jesuits had become strong enough to prevent the utterance of an honest thought in relation to their misdeeds. At that time, Americans were willing to fight and stand up for their ideas of a real lifelike Americanism and their rights.

The thought that those truly manly specimens, who formed a reliable class of the high-

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est type of American citizenship, have passed away, never to return, is not a pleasant one. They formed a political force of great value to the body politic. Being strong, fearless, and honest as they were in action, they were of invaluable assistance in maintaining and enforcing decency in politics. Election day was their great occasion. The whole atmosphere of the city seemed to be filled with the warning voice that "No Irish need apply." They were permitted to work and exist, but not to misgovern and rob as they do now.

During the whole of the decent period in the history of New York, there existed another class, not as stalwart, strong, and bold as the American mechanic, but quite as worthy, in several respects, of being catalogued with him. It was composed of the retail merchants—the small traders who delivered good goods and honest measure for a fair profit; who never stopped to think if "honesty was the best policy," but in all their dealing were honest because it was right to be so. They were hand in hand with the stronger class, and constituted a reserve force which the other could rely upon for encouragement and support. This combination formed a powerful and useful body of liberty-loving and worthy

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citizens, who paid their taxes, voted right, and educated their children to be useful members of society, and it goes without saying that they were Christians to whom the example of Christ's life and sayings, to a considerable extent, was a reality and a living lesson for daily use.

These two classes of right thinkers and honest doers were, in their time, a potent power for good; and the candidates who aspired to office had to come into the political court with clean hands. In those days the boss of the present would have been an impossibility, and the Catholic priest, working foul politics for the benefit of his organization, kept so completely under the rose as never to arouse a suspicion of his deeds of darkness.

Notwithstanding it may not be necessary to state that New York was emphatically an American city, we may as well emphasize the fact that it was quite as much so as Boston, which had always prided itself upon staunch and ultra-national characteristics. New York was quite as American, but with a different complexion, composed of neutral tints, social, political, and religious, blended together and presenting an outline of pleasant aspect, rather than a bringing together

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of a group of unsympathetic angular forms, which repel rather than attract.

Besides these important factors in the general political and citizen make-ups of the metropolis, there were other outlying groups of men engaged in various occupations, none of which was sufficiently numerous to form a distinctive unit by itself. Among these were the milk, coal, meat, fish, fruit, and other merchants on wheels and other distributors of supplies for daily use. In those primitive times the great markets were not as much in evidence as now, and the little local-supply shops, where we are permitted to pay from two to four times the fair valuation for our larder necessities, were few and far between. For these reasons the work of the butcher, fishmonger, and vegetable-man was carried on by the aid of the wagon. These honest perambulating providers for the inner man were not regarded with disrespect or treated as outcasts, as is the costermonger of London. Like other small traders they were industrious, thrifty, and heads of families with homes. They assisted to maintain the church of their choice, and in the affairs of governmental concerns were active and always found on the right side, and, like their friends engaged in other occupations, they

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were uncompromising belligerent Americans. They possessed a stalwart belief in the superiority of everything American, hated anything English with all their might, and would not have hesitated at the roasting of a Pope or two. Their beliefs were honest and deep-rooted, and, at all times, they were ready to give convincing evidence of the sincerity of their convictions.

One of the residence and business centres for the particular classes described was a district known as Corlears Hook. In a group of a dozen blocks were located the well-organized shops of many of these well-to-do mechanics and small traders, all dwelling together, upon terms of mutual respect, in peace and harmony. Their social intercourse was simple, without restraint, and cordial. In sickness and ill-fortune they were ardently helpful to each other; and in death all sympathized with the sorrows of the afflicted neighbor. To the looker-on this intercourse with each other appeared more like that of a country neighborhood than that which usually obtains in a section of a large city.

In the little community around and about the "Hook" there was one real live institution valued above all others. It was known as the "Saturday Night Session," and was

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held at the corner shop of "Cox the Cooper," who presided and took a leading part in all the discussions brought before the savants and local pundits of the "Hook."

Cox, the character of the location, was a noted workman, who had built honest water and air tight barrels on the same corner for more than two scores of years. His trade with Sag Harbor, New London, and New Bedford was as reliable as the pointing of the needle to the pole. It was said that the whalers of those good old towns believed that no other barrel ever existed that could hold whale oil half as securely as those made by "Cox of the Hook;" and none of their ships were considered properly outfitted without a supply of oil-holders from the shop of the reliable Cox. This reputation for honest work at a fair price brought wealth and happiness its owner, and made him the ideal of the whole neighborhood. He was held up as a model for the boys, and had the privilege, in a fatherly way, of kissing all the pretty cherubs in petticoats who chanced to pass his way; and it was a general belief about the Hook that a majority of the pink-cheeked sweet fifteeners would deviate several blocks from the most direct course to school for the purpose of receiving the clean honest

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smack always ready for them. Those were the days when acknowledged virtue had its cash-down rewards.

The weekly Sessions at the cooper-shop were, in their way, picturesque, and, if not as important as the sittings of the "Tobacco Cabinet" of the father of Frederick the Great, they were quite as interesting to those fortunate ones who were permitted to participate in their deliberations. Subjects of local interest usually absorbed the attention of the Sessions, but, once in a while, the wandering council for selections would inject their pokings into the domain of neighborhood scandals, involving the deviations of some backsliding brother or sister, who had yielded to the ardent persuasions of a brother seeking to make recruits for some struggling rival congregation. These backslidings from the kirk of one denomination to that of another were always regarded with serious disfavor, and usually provoked emphatic condemnation. One of the dictums of the Hook was, that the religion of the fathers and mothers was good enough for the children, and that a change of front, in relation to Christian creed, was the unforgivable sin. For many acknowledged reasons, theology held the topmost position among the subjects

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brought before the Sessions for discussion; but questions concerning what constituted true Americanism, and the political situation generally, were more frequently considered.

It may be written of these subjects that the debates upon theology were the most learned; those about Americanism the most exciting, and those upon politics the most varied. Among the debaters were several standard talkers, always on tap, and ready with an overflow of words of wisdom. The Sessions were informal, but, by general consent, Cox presided, and opened proceedings by asking if there was any news, or if anybody had anything to say. Nothing more was needed than this usual starter to set in motion the vibrating procession of intellects. Josiah Jenkinson, a leading milkman and a close-communion Baptist, was a staunch and sturdy defender of infant damnation, was well up in his orthodoxy, and a dealer of heavy blows against all new-fangled innovations. Pilkington, the successful saddler, was high authority on all matters pertaining to higher politics as applied to historic Americanism. He knew the history of the Revolution, could quote George Washington by the hour, and had at the tip of his tongue, ready for action, the entire doings of "the Fathers"

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at the time of the formation of the Constitution. In short, he was high authority, and when he had once called an opponent down, no one dared question his act. Joseph Holden, the stalwart blacksmith of Madison Street, or "Big Joe," as he was called by his familiars because of his great size and strength as well as his good-nature, was perfectly at home in the field of American and English naval history. From two directions he was of illustrious descent. On his father's side, in direct line, he could go back to a warrant-officer on board the "Victory" with Nelson, and his mother's father had been on a bloody deck with Decatur. Among his household treasures were relics of both ancestral patriots. These were exhibited on Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July, when the whole population of the city was invited to inspect. Upon these occasions the American flag was profusely in evidence, and the glories of true Americanism the only subject discussed. At the Sessions Holden was not a great talker, but his few words were often quite as effectual as the blows of his hammer upon his anvil, and every one told. Seth Hathaway was the acknowledged head of the master-shipwrights of the Hook. Born near the end of the eighteenth century,

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he was old enough to have been a boy on board the "Constitution" in her famous cruise when she captured the "Guerrière." He was blessed with a remarkable memory and was a most notable spinner of sea-yarns. Occasionally, when Holden would make a slip in relation to the date of some naval incident, Hathaway would call him down and set his history to rights. Corporal Pearson, the cutler of East Broadway, who had earned his military signification while serving at Lundy's Lane with Scott and in a local militia company, known to the irreverent urchins of the neighborhood as the "Hook-town Rangers," was a constant attendant at the Sessions, and, although not brilliant as a talker or notable in debate, he was known to be somewhat profound when it came to thinking, and was a sturdy supporter of the Methodist side of all theological questions. He often made it warm for the gentlemen on the other side, and, when he had finished his argument, his audience had to admit that Pearson carried brimstone on both shoulders.

These personages were not leaders: they have been outlined for the purpose of showing the human quality of the Sessions rather than the quantity. There were half

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a score or more, besides, who, in many respects, were the equals of those described. Each had his special field, and knew how to set forth his propositions with force and sufficient clearness to interest an audience of "Hookites." In those days there were neither stenographers nor typewriters, and so, unfortunately, the tons of wisdom that were let fall those nights at Cox's, which ought to have become historic, are lost, and cannot be cited among the rare examples of exceptional American eloquence.

The traditions of the "Hook" are singularly uniform in setting forth the usual good order which prevailed during the meetings of the Sessions. No matter how warm the discussion, order and good-nature ruled the proceedings. There was, however, one well-remembered exception to the general rule. A certain Yankee skipper, named Jabez Blaisdell, hailing from Gloucester, who fished on the "Banks" during the cod season, and freighted through Long Island Sound all other seasons, had, by stress of breakage on the part of the good schooner "Eliza Blaisdell," been compelled to go into the repair yard of the reliable Seth Hathaway for repairs.

It so happened that during the detention of the "Eliza B." there was to be a Session,

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and the good ship-doctor, suspecting no harm, asked the bold skipper of the *Cod Banks* to attend. The night arrived, and Captain Blaisdell, in his best suit of brass buttons, on short sea-blue broadcloth, jacket and all, was steered into port under the pilotage of the confiding mender of ships. The guest was duly presented to the assembled members, his history recounted, and his merits as an accomplished seaman of experience elaborated. Peace reigned and a high pressure of happiness filled the air. It so happened, as it often does, when the unexpected is about to occur, that there was an unseen sword, capable of doing decisive execution, dangling in the air. That unfortunate night there was a careless manager of the fates on duty, who shaped the course of the Session nearly to a point of fatal disaster. In regular order, after the usual questions of the presiding official, Jeroloman Purdy, chief workman in the fashionable hat-shop of Catharine Street, responded to the call, and announced that he had something to say. He had lately been seduced from the ironclad mysteries of the Westminster Creed and gone over to the more liberal and fascinating allurements of the Thirty-Nine Articles. He ventured to suggest, with logical exactitude,

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and in far too pleasing colors for his audience, the superiority of the thirty-nine over all other creeds known to the various orthodoxies then in vogue. This was before the Mormons had launched their new ark of many matrimonial covenants; the Spiritualists were in the womb of the future, and the most disordered dream could not have pictured the fantasies of the Christian Scientists. Had these existed we might be called upon to record a still deeper fall from the grace of serpent-made sin.

The launching of the joyful experience in relation to the newly found theological Elysium, proved to be a whole load of apples of discord roughly cast upon the quiet waters of the Session, and, long before the offender had resumed his seat, hot shot were pouring in from the heavy ordnance mounted upon the outworks of the various orthodoxies represented. When the speaker sat down, there was a great uproar. Condemnation unanimous was on top and temperate exhortation out of the question. As usual, when dissension and disorder came to the surface, Cox, with his level appreciation of conditions, came to the rescue with a proposition that the matter under discussion, being of serious import, should go over to a coming meeting

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for further consideration, when members would be better prepared to answer the argument of their fellow-member. After a temperate speech of five minutes by Holden, sustaining the Chair, a majority vote was cast for the going over.

Peace having been restored, and the evening still young, the chairman suggested that there was time for further observations if any gentleman present desired to speak. This invitation brought the mender of ships to his feet, who, after clearing his throat, remarked that there was present among them a stranger from the good old Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who knew the sea and, in his day, had seen many foreign parts; and he, no doubt, could tell them many things that they would like to hear, and he begged permission of the chairman to ask Captain Blaisdell of the schooner "Eliza Blaisdell" of the good old sea-town of Gloucester, to favor the Session with a few remarks. This proposition was received with becoming applause, and the chairman hoped the honored Captain would respond. The guest fairly jumped to the occasion with as much alacrity as in the early days of his career, when ordered to go aloft during his first voyage, on the good ship "Rainbow," when he sailed the world around.

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It may not be out of place to write that the gallant captain, who was about to go into the business of distributing firebrands, was the most distinguished-looking personage in that whole assemblage. He was little above the medium height, straight as the oft-quoted arrow, compact, and so solidly put together that it was easy to see that his snug fitting sailorman clothes covered no superfluous adipose matter. Muscle, fiber, and bones were represented in due proportion, and the whole was topped off by a head of almost classic mould, which carried brows that partially concealed beneath their ample projections a pair of clear, piercing gray eyes which might have been equal to the work of the highest-perching eagle that ever soared above the everlasting snows of the Andes. The whole make-up indicated strength, courage, and conviction. If he had lived at the time of the Athenian games, and had entered to contest, Pericles would have chosen him for the highest honors and Aspasia bestowed upon him her most fascinating and enticing smile.

This was the man on his feet. After a performâ clearing of his throat and apologizing for presuming to attempt to entertain so distinguished an audience, he struck out for

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several well-defined objectives with a vigor which, figuratively, shook the rafters of the old cooper-shop as they had never been shaken before—at least since the great wind-storm near the end of the previous century—when the “whole roof was lifted and dropped in the lot beyond.”

He acted like one who had cut loose from all hindering bearings, and dashed into the fight without fear or wish for support. He said:—“I have listened to the discussion this evening with a great deal of interest, more, perhaps, than any of you can imagine. For you must know that this whole Bible business has been a sort of a specialty of mine ever since I knew an anchor from a bowsprit. My father commenced fighting his side of the battle before I was born, and, as soon as I got old enough, I was mustered in as a recruit for his gun’s crew, and that is one of the reasons why I have been firing hot shot ever since I was old enough to bite a cartridge.

“I’m not aboard either of your crafts. Down where we sail from, we cut the cables and went adrift from the old brimstone hulks years and years ago, to sail on the ocean of freedom where men count for something, and creeds, articles of faith, and iron-clad

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meek-faced professions very little, and I tell you none of us have regretted the cutting away with the strong old pilot who went before us.

“Way back in the last century, we had a message from out the Kingdom of Common Sense and set up a new light, and the messenger who brought it stopped over night at Charity Four Corners, and, when he sailed away, he was loaded down to the rail with the best cargo a skipper ever carried from a port. He came in under full canvas to the good old sea-town of Gloucester, on the shores of Massachusetts, with a cargo to gladden the hearts of the heavy-laden, and, to assist in lifting the burdens from shoulders not strong enough to bear them, he proclaimed ‘Peace on Earth and Good-Will to Man,’ and told us that was the ever-living rule of action which had been taught by the loving, gentle representative on earth of the Great Captain.

“At first the brimstone divisions of the Lord’s army were shocked, and did not dare look at the man who had courage to utter such unheard-of heresy, and they would have driven the blasphemer out of town. But a few brave men and women said he was honest and that he should have fair treatment,

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and stay with them long enough to tell them what he had to say; and what he said and taught has remained a living lesson in the staunch old Yankee town from that day to this. With a brave backing to sustain him, he opened ports and spread all sail to the breeze, nor feared shoals, rocks, or headwinds. The good ship 'Charity,' Captain John Murray, Able Seaman, kept right on her course on the boundless ocean of humanity, with her master at the wheel, until the greater Captain of all called him to a higher command.

"Before he came among us to the rescue, our plain simple-minded people had been told, in one breath, that an all-merciful and loving God had, from the very outset of his work in this world, damned all of his children to everlasting flames, because a silly woman had eaten a bit of fruit which she had taken from the mouth of a snake in the Garden of Eden. And the worst of it was, if you can believe it, they were fools enough to swallow such a repulsive dose. If you will stop and think the matter over, and don't believe too quick, you will come to the conclusion that the kind of love your orthodox God bestows upon his children is of the sort you would not care to accept from your own father; and

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if you are half-way honest and decent, you would not deal it out to your own children.

“The light that came to us from out the new Kingdom gave us some novel ideas about love and charity. We were told that the one particular representative of the God we were to worship had upon an occasion been called upon to listen to accusations against an unfortunate woman who had deviated from the straight course, and, after hearing all her accusers had to say, lifted her up, and, in gentle tones of compassion, said: ‘Go thy way, and sin no more.’ The good men, like the orthodox of to-day, who had brought her before Him were doubtless horrified and scandalized, because the terrors of Hell were not invoked for the unfortunate sinner and she consigned to the regions of torture. In this connection you will remember that, when her accusers were the loudest in their demands for condemnation, the same gentle voice said something about the casting of stones at the unfortunate before him. And if what he said was right, and I believe it was, none of us can afford to throw stones at the most degraded or unfortunate of the human race.

In these two sayings, compressed in a nutshell, are the entire teachings of the Master teacher we all pretend to follow and worship;

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and yet how far we fall short of living up to the least of his admonitions. Admitting this is the knowing of our own shortcomings, then why should we be so exacting with others? Christianity without charity for each other—I mean real living charity—not that dead-and-alive sort of stuff that is active in prosperity and inactive in adversity, which is an empty shell with no meat inside. A profession of religion without charity for the weaknesses and misfortunes of others is a morally deforming pretence as empty as it is worthless to its owner. Do you know what our Captain would say, if he were here to-night, about such professors? It would be something like this: ‘Oh, ye praying hypocrites, how little ye are of me and how much of your deceitful selves.’

“Ever since I was old enough to see through a ship’s glass I have been on and of the salt water, and, as I look back, it seems to me that I took my love for it in with my mother’s milk, and, soon as I got old enough to toddle, I paddled in it, and threw stones into it, to see the splash they made upon the surface of that ocean which, in after years, was to become my home. Since then I have been everything from cabin-boy to master; and the more I know of my second mother the more I love

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her. Even her furious moods bring her closer to my heart, and I am never so happy as when holding the course of a staunch vessel through a great storm, which makes us feel and appreciate in all its fearful might and power the grandeur of the great unseen force of the Almighty. Many a night, when alone on the deck with the wheel, I have looked aloft into the clear blue sky and tried to pierce the mysteries beyond the stars to find out what there is hidden beyond them. And the more I have tried the greater the mystery, and the more I am convinced that it was not intended we should know the secrets of the unseen worlds beyond. So I am compelled to take it for granted that the great power that placed us where we are to-day will look after us in the never-ending to-morrow. But one or two things we do know: we must do our part in the way of honesty, good faith in all things, and deal out charity and kindness wherever we can, and, if we do all these, we need have no fears about the future. When we reach our last port of entry, the question of what we believed down here will not be asked, but the Captain of the port will want a clear log, telling of deeds done. So sail the right course, and have no fear either for here or for the hereafter.

♥

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“I suppose I ought to beg pardon for what I have said, but I don’t feel very much like it; and if I have thrown out a kedge in the wrong direction, I could n’t help it. I’m not a missionary; that sort of business is not in my line, but I’ve tried, now and then, to drop an anchor where I know the bottom is good, but a little hard. It will not be my fault if it doesn’t hold.

“Now, in parting, let me say another word which I hope you’ll take in good part. Overhaul your charts, take new observations for correcting bearings, and, my word for it, before you have got through with your work you’ll want a complete set of new sailing directions. Now, good night, and may health and prosperity be with you.”

During the preaching of this unexpected sermon, silent astonishment reigned supreme, and upon the countenance of each hearer there was to be seen an expression which told of a new and startling sensation. At first there was a feeling on the part of the most indurated of the truly orthodox to call down the daring blasphemer. But, as he proceeded, disapproval and interest had so increased, that the call for a halt died an unobserved death. When the orator took his seat, there was neither applause nor congratulations.

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The hearers looked in every direction save towards the offending skipper. Hathaway, the innocent cause of the evening's offence, seeing the reigning embarrassment, and suffering under the weight of guilt he was compelled to bear, moved to adjourn. The vote, unanimous, like the toast usually drunk standing and in silence for a recently departed, was recorded in the affirmative. The audience, passing out, avoided the side of the room occupied by the fearless offender.

No proposition could be further out of the way than to judge this community by its faith in a varied assortment of case-hardened orthodox merciless creeds. It is true that they were relentless sticklers, each for the perfect directness of his own particular road to eternity; and none would admit that the right sort of salvation could be reached by going over another. And as for probation after death, indulgence in such a thought would have been regarded as an unforgivable heterodoxy; and yet, notwithstanding the hardness of their Christianity, they were honest men and women and good citizens.

Running along, hand in hand with their hardened beliefs, was the living, active, deep-rooted conviction that honesty and good faith in all affairs of life should be the rule of

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action. Religion to them meant something besides a hymn book, the family bible, a meek face and a Sunday suit of clothes. A contract once made with them was perfectly sure of faithful performance as to time, quality, and quantity; no watching, as in these days, to prevent the practice of every conceivable species of fraud.

These purely Protestant American communities no longer exist. About 1850, vicious foreigners, for the most part of a very low strain, commenced to flood our unfortunate shores, and now, in the place of our passed-away splendid specimens of strong, true manhood, we have the habitual foreign-born cheat and time-serving trickster, bent upon deception, and giving the worst possible "job" for the highest possible price.

LETTER FROM JOSEPH HOLDEN TO HIS MOTHER

DEAR MOTHER :

We had a first-class stirring-up at the "Session" the other night. Jerry Purdy commenced the performance by telling how happy he had been since he quit the old meeting-house and went over to the Piscople. This did not amount to much, and would n't have made much of a disturbance, but he had to go on with his foolish talk about the superiority of his thirty-nine articles over all other creeds. That was a little bit more than most of us could stand; and, soon as he got through, the whole

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place was in a howl. Everybody was up and wanted to have his say all at the same time, and I tell you it looked pretty squally. But Cox, as usual, was the only cool head of the whole lot, and when he said the matter under consideration was serious and weighty, wanted a great deal of thinking over, and needed more time, it was dropped—I suppose until the next "Session."

But what we had gone through was n't a priming for the hot shot to come. Seth Hathaway had under his wing a full-blooded Yankee skipper from Massachusetts, who had put in for repairs, and, without knowing anything about him, got him on his feet for a speech. And didn't we get it. Hot shot for a full half-hour! Such a talk as was never heard in that old Cooper's shop before. He said they'd had a minister down in the old seaport town he came from who had invented a new religion leaving Hell out altogether; that there would n't be any punishment after death, and that we need n't be afraid of Hell, save only for the one we make for ourselves here. And he went on with a lot more about Christ having come on earth to teach love and charity and good-will and all that for everybody, sinners included. He told us that creeds and beliefs weren't of so much account as most folks pretend, but that to act right was the great business of life; and that when we get to Heaven we won't be asked what we believed down here, but would have to show a clean log of life's voyage. And, finally, that we were all wrong in our bearings, and if we'd overhaul the facts in the case, we would call for a new chart with better and plainer sailing directions.

Such depravity none of us had ever heard before, and some of them said it was a wonder the roof had n't tumbled in and destroyed us all. The talkers were so dumb-founded that, when he sat down, not one could say a

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word. We all believed the feller was honest, and Hathaway said he was as square as a brick, but on the wrong tack. We all shunned him as we would a small-pox wagon. But, somehow, I could n't quite feel that he was all wrong—he looked so honest and bold and strong. Soon as I can get time I intend to study the matter up for myself and see what there is to it. Like as not his doctrine may not be so bad, after all. I wish you could have been there and seen how they took it.

Your affectionate son,

JOSEPH HOLDEN.

Eighteen hundred and forty-seven was known as the "Great Famine Year" in Ireland, and a year of plenty in our own country; and, as usual, our ships were loaded with food and sent to succor the starving. These acts of charity were blessings for them, but a resulting curse for us. For then it was, for the first time, that the Irish priests came to a realizing sense of our resources. They examined more carefully than before our scheme of government, and recognized our utter silliness in attempting to found a well-regulated and reputable government upon manhood suffrage; and they immediately set to work the usual Romish machinery, intended for its ultimate capture and degradation; so that by 1850 it was in full operation, and has been working at high-pressure

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point from that time to the present. And now the taxpayers, the police forces, criminal judges, managers of eleemosynary institutions, and keepers of prisons of all our large cities, and a majority of the lesser, are fully and feelingly aware of the results.

Before the advancing accumulations of these and other invading priest-ridden hordes of semi-savages, our purely American communities have melted away and left no trace behind or evidence of what they once were. The little community of the Hook held on to its distinctive individuality with characteristic tenacity until the middle of the last century, and then disappeared. It could not stand against the great deluge of degraded humanity from foreign shores; and, in the presence of that mighty onward-moving procession of evil purpose, headed by a brazen standard-bearer who carried, figuratively, the ill-omened green flag of Erin with mitre and cross keys surmounting, the old true spirit of the Stars and Stripes went down. That was the beginning of a period which has ended in our complete subjugation, accompanied by our moral and political degradation.

If called upon to write an appropriate inscription for their final resting-place, what

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could be more appropriate than this:—
“Here are buried the mortal remains of honest men and women who once formed a community of true Americans. They believed in virtue and patriotism, and fought valiantly for their beliefs until compelled to surrender to the overwhelming power of foreign invaders. They feared God, and the Hell of their day, and did right.”

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UNDOUBTEDLY the greatest art-incident of the last century was the launching upon the peaceful sea of musical content of the startling and original works of Richard Wagner. They came like the often-cited dark cloud from out the clear sky of a placid summer's day; and the only immediate questions asked were: who and why?

At first the musicians were bewildered; the amateur and the average lover of music were overwhelmed with astonishment, and wondered what it was all about; and only a venturesome few attempted a solution of musical puzzles which appeared to be beyond the power of classification.

After a while, orchestras distant from the Wagnerian centers began to perform carefully-arranged selections from the most taking and comprehensible parts of the different scores, and the music critics began to try to

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explain the subtle secrets of the new lyric mysteries. But all the information imparted from these sources failed to give even an index perception of the surprises which were in store for those who had studied the works of the most notable of the past composers.

The selections performed by the orchestras were arranged, for the most part, from the simplest harmonic and melodious parts of the stage compositions, and were justly regarded as being remarkable for their complete originality, convincing expression, and new progressions of tone-combinations, which resulted in original harmonies of rare grandeur and melodies of unqualified beauty. In each there abounded characteristics quite their own which at once stamped their composer as a master-genius of exceptional and original power.

In this limited orchestral way, communities and even nations were partly educated to a point of sanguine expectation seldom equalled, and, when the opportunities arrived for witnessing the completed works of the master, they were prepared for novel feasts of exceptional beauties which they had been led to believe were in store for them.

What follows in this paper is not a serious attempt to either question or analyze the

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works of an admittedly great genius. It proposes, only, in an *ad captandum* way, by direct statement, and also by anecdotal or historic indirection, to give some of the reasons why a considerable portion of the expectants were disappointed when they witnessed the completed works of the master.

The fact that one of the layman class—an individual of no particular importance, with little or no pretence to musical culture—had been to see and hear the opera, or whatever else it may be called, of *Tristan and Isolde* by Richard Wagner, and managed to sit through the whole performance, is not of special importance; but the people who constitute the public are usually more or less interested in the entertainments to which they are invited to contribute towards sustaining, and for that reason I am putting down a few thoughts, queries, and anecdotes which seem to be germane to the Wagnerian proposition, and, possibly, worthy of some little consideration.

The strenuous advocates and ardent admirers of that composer claim that his works have attained to the highest level of excellence in musical composition yet known; and some of his most partial advocates now call him the "Shakespeare of Music."

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Up to the time of Wagner's discovery of his peculiar methods, the intelligent portion of the civilized world had possessed themselves of some rather clear, definite, and somewhat fixed and settled ideas as to what the term music meant. But since the advent of the forceful "Music of the Future," a goodly number, many of whom are more or less musical, are beginning to doubt if they ever clearly comprehended the meaning of that old and simple word. Beyond all reasonable doubt, for several centuries, it had indicated a combination of art and science the practical results of which have pleased the senses and soothed the troubled nerves, rather than stood for seemingly enigmatical abstractions, or a series of strange sounds which mystifies and confuses all minds save those that are metaphysically disposed or are severely classical, according to the newest interpretation of that term. Possibly, to those who are so exceptionally favored, anything, however strange, fierce, grotesque, or out of the ordinary, may appear to be pleasant or beautiful.

The amorous Knight Don of Cervantes, transformed, to suit his ideal, the coarsest type of a village wench into the fairest Dulcinea the world ever beheld; a professional

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gourmet prefers decayed game to fresh; the gentleman from Kentucky prefers even the raw staple of his place and period, if he cannot get old, to champagne; and many, among those of to-day seeking the confused lights of the murky etherial, prefer Browning to Byron. The Chinese have a kind of music about six thousand years old, which, to untutored and uncultivated ears, seems to be like that of the present school of the future; and these unsanctified heathens prefer the music of their ancient and peculiar school to that of any other. They appear to be very fond of noise and some little rhythm thrown in here and there in detached spots; but they are as innocent of self-evident continuity of motive as the most ardent disciple of Bayreuth could demand.

The lexicographers agree that music is a science which teaches the properties, dependencies, and relations of melodious sounds—an art over which the Muses preside; any combination of sounds agreeable to the ear, melody, harmony, and symphony. Shakespeare believed that a concord of sweet sounds and music are the same. Congreve assures us “that music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,” and many other notable poets and writers of all times have written

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of it as though they considered melody and harmony the most essential parts of music.

It has been generally believed that sympathetic melodies have a tendency to soothe and calm the troubled spirits of those burdened with sorrow; and that the simple, solid harmonies of such unpretending compositions as "Old Hundred," "God Save the King," and hundreds of other kindred compositions, with their steady onflowing progressions, thrill through the human organism, and lift the mind to realms of reverence, patriotism, peace, and noble aspirations. The words and simple melody of such—unfortunately now out of date—fireside songs as "Home, Sweet Home," the "Last Rose of Summer," and many scores of others that might be mentioned, appeal to the sentimental side of our natures and touch the innermost recess of the human heart. Their simplicity of construction evokes emotional responses from all kindly natures and often excites the emotions of several kinds of the lower animals.

Many of the national airs of the various nations are truly inspiring in the simple grandeur of their expression of patriotic sentiments; but the "Marseillaise" is the greatest of all the marching and fighting

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songs. As a combination of patriotic words and appropriate moving musical sounds it has never been surpassed. Its words inspire the loftiest sentiments of patriotism, while its impassioned stirring strains lead those who sing them to deeds of heroic daring. It is possible that this single popular composition of *Roger de Lisle* may outlive the whole school of the purely exclamatory compositions.

While I am an ardent believer in the popular and patriotic compositions which are known to the civilized nations, and am with Dibdin, to an extent, in his saying that he did not care who made the laws of a country so long as he could write their songs, I cannot forget or cease to admire the works of such composers as Beethoven, Mozart, and other great Germans, and the more notable among the Italians and French whose compositions are known and, even now, are the household property of the refined and cultured wherever music is known. And some of the later composers of our own time, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Weber, Verdi, Gounod, Thomas, Chopin, and others, have erected musical monuments which will never perish. These were melodists and harmonists, and their works prove, as plainly as

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possible, that they believed in the power of those simple progressions which produce the grandest harmony and the simplest melodies. It evidently never occurred to them that detached noises should be the chief end and aim of musical composition.

A musical composition, in its established and better sense, means an independent quantity and quality, each composition standing quite by itself and wholly independent of collateral support. Logically an opera is an absolute absurdity, but not always an unpleasant one. It may have airs, duets, trios, quartets, and choruses, which can be appropriately rendered in the concert room without the aid of machinery, scenery, properties, or dresses; but there are several of Wagner's exclamatory specialities that have not a single voice composition worthy or susceptible of an independent performance. This is notably the case with his admittedly acute masterpiece, *Tristan and Isolde*, which has not a single singable air or melody in it; and it may be said of nearly all of his stage and scenic works that, if the orchestral supports were left out, the vocal parts of the scores could not be performed—i. e., to pleasurable profit.

I hold it as a great and dominant truth that the first office of all the arts is to

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interpret beauty—to express joy, and thereby to add something to the sum total of human happiness, and when either of the greater arts fails to accomplish this it might as well not exist.

Of all the sisterhood of the arts, music is the one which comes the nearest to taking full possession of the human heart. If very beautiful and sympathetic in its continuity of noble harmony and appealing melody, it takes possession of our most active and acute sense, and through that finds its way to the seat of human emotions. But it is a popular mistake to suppose it goes directly to the seat of our physical emotions. These pleasurable vibrations find their way to the heart through the finer and most sympathetic sense which adorns the human intellect. The capture of that appreciation is involuntary and imperceptible, and it comes to us as a joyous perception which takes and holds whether we will or not, and only releases when the last beautiful strain has lost itself in the depths of our rapt appreciation.

It is very difficult for the unmusical man to comprehend what Wagner did believe in more than noise. It is absolutely certain that in that one quality he had unbounded faith; and, when he exemplified that faith to the

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extent of his capacity and modern resources, he produced his music of the future.

In verity, in Paris Wagner had a hard time. His efforts for a foothold never succeeded, and his long period of waiting, covering years of disappointments, was crowned with that weight of poverty which crushes without killing. Promises were made by those in authority which were never intended to be kept; but, through all the vexations he was compelled to endure, there were a few friends of great influence who stood by him and had made up their minds that he should be granted a hearing. Among them were the Prince and Princess Metternich, the Princess Mathilde, some other of the notables and a small number from among the men of letters.

The Emperor Napoleon like the others, had made promises which were not kept, and the Princess Mathilde, who among all his relatives was the favorite, had often chided him for his want of good faith. In fact, as the story goes, she had upon several occasions made it rather torrid for his Imperial Highness, and at one certain Sunday evening gathering, at the Tuileries, she became so fervent in her demand for promise keeping that the Emperor, conditionally, was compelled to yield. At that time Paris had a

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woman. Paris usually has a woman. She was one of those coarse-voiced singers, so-called, we often find at the *Ambassadeurs* and other like places. She was vigorously graceful, and did the highest kicks, by one of her sex, up to that time, ever seen in Paris. In answer to the appeal of Princess Mathilde the Emperor said: — "I will send for my hat, and if you will do for it what—— on the stage does for the hats of others every night, here, now, and in the presence of this company, *Tannhäuser* shall be produced." Not to be foiled by any such test of her earnestness as the one proposed, the brave little woman said: "Produce the hat." It was sent for; the Emperor placed it upon his head, and, taking his position in the middle of the room, the Princess, gathering her skirts appropriately out of the way of the kicking member, with a sudden quickness, that no other woman on earth could manage so well as a French woman, shot out the toe of her right slipper to the needed height, and sent the Imperial hat bounding against the nearest chandelier. In due time *Tannhäuser* was produced and recorded a failure, said to have been promoted by a conspiracy planned at the Jockey Club and carried to a success in the Opera House.

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The performance was followed by the consequent wonderment of all Paris, and not one among those who witnessed it could understand the why of its existence. Its music to them was absolutely incomprehensible. One critic described it as a volcanic eruption from the other side of the Rhine purposely sent to Paris for creating a panic among the French. Prosper Mérimée, when asked by Theophile Gautier what he thought of it, replied: — "I don't know, nor does any one else, anything about it. Its existence can be accounted for upon only one possible theory. It may have been composed and performed in Paris to pay off the French for having captured and occupied Berlin in 1806; and, if it was, the Germans have got the best of it. Their revenge is complete, and we must be careful about interfering with their capital a second time."

The first serious operatic incursion of Wagnerians into the West created as much consternation as had its predecessor when it made its entrance into the capital of France. A correspondent, then living in Chicago, of one of the well-known trans-Mississippi journals, wrote a graphic description of what he had seen and heard, and the following is transcribed, not quite literally, from the end

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of his communication: "More interesting than the performance was the audience of which I was a part. Nothing could be more curious than the various facial expressions by which I was surrounded. Some expressed impatience at not having reached the end, others determination to sit it out, and occasionally could be seen a countenance showing mental distress and worryment, while the majority of the audience looked as though they were saying to themselves 'I wonder what it is all about and what a fool I was to come,' and towards the end everybody looked intensely bored." This quotation is inserted to show the effect of the new school upon an unknowing Philistine of the Western type.

The Wagner cult came in time, appropriately and in natural order, out of a period which gave birth to such exceptionals as Browning, with his well-nigh incomprehensible and complicated so-called poetry, Whitman with his barbaric yawpings, Burne-Jones with his sickly, sentimental, boneless sinuosities, which, if alive, could neither move, think, nor speak; Manet, with his splashings and streakings of paint, which are usually devoid of intelligible purpose, form, or expression, Rodin, a sculptor of wondrous power, but with the abnormal strain which

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culminated in the production of his nightmare statue of Balzac, and others of the nineteenth century abnormals that might be mentioned. Such as these have been enthroned by their worshippers, who have set aside all that has gone before in the way of beauty in form or bearing the charm of simplicity in expression. These are the apostles of disorder who have tried to set the arts by the ears and banish forever from use those old methods of composition and execution which have produced the great masterpieces of all ages. So it seems that the Wagnerian discovery was an essential which came in time to complete the circle of abnormals, who, with their period, had to be set to music, and we are regretfully compelled to place to the credit of its power, greater, and more far-reaching influence in its particular field than we can give to either of the others.

The triumphant coming in of this disregard for simplicity of form, without which the expression of the beautiful is impossible, sounded the death knell of the real *dilettante* and left little else in its place than an indiscriminate non-intelligent patronage for the confused mechanical deformities produced by the abnormals and the half-instructed pretenders, who have usurped the places once

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occupied by earnest and honest workers, who were guided by lofty aspirations and a proper appreciation of the proprieties involved in their undertakings.

It is claimed by the ardent advocates of the Wagnerian innovations that they have achieved a dominant influence—have driven out of the musical field a large proportion of the favorite compositions enjoyed by past generations, and have influenced to an entire change of method, spirit, and color nearly all of our later compositions; and, it must be acknowledged, to such an extent that a large number of present composers are content to be imitators of their be-worshipped prototype. The harm, in this direction, is beyond estimation, as anyone who keeps *au courant* with present-time compositions can appreciate, and especially with the instrumental, which often consist of a series of disconnected noises, more or less violently executed, without a discernible motive, and usually most offensive to the ear. These compositions find their most fitting and offensive expression in the *Fest Marsch* and the *Vorspiel*. They are, evidently, test compositions to be handed in at the entrance of the Wagnerian temple before the neophyte can be admitted to full communion.

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These compositions and their kindred stand for all that is incomprehensible, unsympathetic and repulsive in the new school; and are nothing if not musical nightmares that disturb to the point of distraction—almost without exciting a single pleasurable emotion. Apparently, to the non-expert, they show only detached groups of short passages, of a few bars each, which seem to stand quite by themselves, having no connection with the passage that preceded or the one that follows; and the whole appears to show but one motive: a succession of *outré* difficulties which none outside a learned few can understand.

The influence of this kind of composition has also affected to a disheartening extent the composers who have and others who might have written real operas, but who instead have given to the world such incomprehensible sound-rubbish as *Mefistofeles*, *Esclarmonde*, *Le Cid*, *Die Königin von Saba*, *Sigurd*, and others of the same order, with which a too-patient world has been afflicted within the last thirty years.

But the harm done in the way of demoralization among the composers is nothing compared to the destruction of vocalism and the wrecking of human voices. The male singers

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after having yelled and bellowed their parts, and the ill-fated women who have screamed and screeched through the Wagnerian *répertoire*, are no longer vocalists. And, often, when too late, find themselves compelled to delve in their limited field a few years, and then retire with a broken voice to regret the past and to wonder what they might have been had they chosen another path. The Wagnerian cemetery is strewn with the bones of these unfortunates, who might have been real singers.

Possibly the most complete expression of this peculiar kind of composition, which an irreverent American has designated as "Boiler Shop Music," appeared in Philadelphia at the opening of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. The directors of that Exhibition wanted a centennial march worthy of the occasion, and were induced by an authority, of German origin, in matters of music, to engage Wagner to undertake the composition of such a work. The agreed-upon price was ten thousand dollars. In due time the score was delivered and the price paid. It was performed at the opening of the exhibition under the leadership of Theodore Thomas at the head of a large orchestra of selected performers.

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When the command to commence was given by the raising of the *bâton* tens of thousands of patriotic citizens were crowding the upper heights of supreme expectation. But what a wondrous disappointment they were destined to experience! Those untutored simple people had expected to hear something in the real old historic marching time, cast in a heroic mould, with a movement which in the ages past had carried millions of brave men to deeds of valor and glorious victory—such as had excited the patriotic emotions of our own who had fought and fallen upon the many fields which have made our people known for their deeds of daring. But instead they were treated to a series lasting about fifteen minutes, of roars, bangs, blasts and blares of unmeaning sound without rhythm, form, color or expression. From the beginning to the end it was an impudent impertinence. With its first performance, without regret or applause, it went to the immeasurable depths of an avenging oblivion and has never been heard of since.

It is not only for music that I make the plea for simplicity of form and expression, but for the other arts as well. The masterpieces of all the greater periods are chiefly characteristic for their directness both as to

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composition and execution. In their architecture, sculpture, poetry, and prose, the Greeks carried these qualities to the extreme limit of perfection; and achieved a degree of lofty dignity and harmonious grandeur not known before, which perished with their decadence never to reappear.

Her arts and culture made Athens the Queen of the ancient civilizations, and no monarch ever wore a more befitting crown than the noble structure that adorned the heights of the Acropolis. It was at once the sign of her glory and culture; and never before nor since has there been seen a structure which in itself embodied so much that stood for and illustrated the greater qualities of a nation — its strength, its refinement, its education, and complete appreciation of the appropriately artistic. The solemnity of its dignified and symmetrical outline made it appear as though fashioned by nature for the place upon which it rests. Viewed from any point it proved grandeur of conception and perfection of purpose. The Parthenon illustrates, by standing at the head of its line, only one division in the field of Greek culture and refinement. In sculpture her artists excelled all others in their noble conceptions and simple methods of execution. Without ornament

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or exceptional poses they managed to express the emotions and human realities of everyday life. When they executed a portrait statue, it was of the man, showing quality of position, often the plane of occupation and mental habit. We see these qualities completely exemplified in the Lateran Statue of Sophocles, the Dying Gladiator of the Capitol Museum and the Athlete in the *Braccio Nuovo* of the Vatican. The latter represents a semi-heroic ideal, but undoubtedly from nature, conceived and executed in the better Greek spirit, showing a real man.

Of the later sculptors since the culmination of the Greek period only three can be named: Donatello, Michael Angelo and Rodin, who in some of their works have shown to completeness the true Greek spirit. The St. John of the first has the merit of originality of conception, charm of unaffected simplicity as to treatment and other qualities which stand for and illustrate the characteristics intended to be represented. The Moses of the second—simple, dignified and strong—impresses more than it pleases, but having been seen can never be forgotten. It has about it so much of each—the sculptor and the law-giver. His sitting statue of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino—known as "*Il Pensoso*" in the

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Medicean Chapel, more than any other reveals to us the greatest genius known to history. Although unlike the Greeks in the details of its execution, its bigness of purpose and exceptional power for expression, make it one of the most striking among the fascinating art monuments of the world. Rodin is the only sculptor of our later times, who, without imitating, in some of his works has shown a rare appreciation of Greek methods. His nude statue of the Aryan Age, executed in the truest spirit of directness and simplicity, and his exceptionally impressive group of the "*Bourgeois de Calais*" entitle him to be ranked with the best who have gone before. Among our own countrymen who have made good statues may be mentioned St. Gaudens, in whose statue of Lincoln we see in its truest sense a rare greatness of purpose and successful execution. Bartlett's Michael Angelo is another successful effort in the same direction; and no sculptor of our own times has sent to posterity a more characteristic presentment of an exceptional character than the *Tribune* statue of Greeley, executed by J. Q. A. Ward.

The same rules the Greeks applied so successfully we readily recognize in many of the works of the more notable painters of the later

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times. The Sistine Madonna and portrait of Julius II. of Raphael, the Anatomical Lesson and Portrait of the Gilder by Rembrandt, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci, the Innocent X. by Velasquez, the Sacred and Profane Love and the Bella Donna of Titian, the *Décadence* of Couture, the Portrait of Léon Coignet by Bonnat and Whistler's portrait of his mother. These and more by the same masters, and others, prove the lasting value of what might almost be designated as the Greek formula in relation to the execution of the veritable artistic.

The beauty of, and truths expressed in the works enumerated, strike the beholder at once, and need no labored explanations or strenuous arguments to convince of their superior value as real works of art in its better, universally acknowledged, and legitimate sense. While music appeals to another sense—hearing instead of seeing—it is a fact that beauty of form and expression, in each instance, are the qualities that captivate and hold our realization of the beautiful—in the sounds we hear the same as in the objects we see.

If in the Wagnerian scheme there lurked an intent to do away with the *bel canto* in vocalism, we may record the absolute fact of

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its success. For now within the whole field of the Wagnerian Cult there is not a single vocalist who could present to us the faintest shadow of the truly beautiful of the supreme art, which in the past had among its votaries some of the greatest names known to the history of the divine art of sympathetic and sentimental vocalism. It has been said of Wagner that, when he was remonstrated with in relation to the seeming impossibility of executing some of the so-called vocal parts of his scores, and the probable destructive effects upon the voices of those who might attempt to sing them, he answered "destruction of voices is no affair of mine: there is the score."

One argument frequently used in favor of the Wagnerian music is that it is not popular; and I believe it is true that the vocal is seldom heard outside of an opera-house and the instrumental mostly in the concert-room. This certainly indicates an exceptional mercy. If the hand-organs were to appropriate some parts of it for daily use they would send whole communities to lunatic-asylums, and make life for those who remain outside their walls a burden quite beyond human endurance. There has always existed a rather well-founded belief that musicians

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were pleased when their compositions became popular. Popularity oftentimes brings profit and pleasure, both of which are gratifying to that quality of vanity which is as universal as humanity. But we are led to infer that the music of the future is above any such trifling consideration. Its votaries appear to be satisfied with what they assume ought to be the approval of all mankind.

One of the most curious of all the curiosities this musical revolution has developed is the professional American musical critic. He is at once all-knowing and imperial. He brooks no dissension from his *dictums*, and sits enthroned upon an upper level of omnipotent superiority. Upon his favorite subject he is always eloquent, if not convincing; but it is only after listening to *Tristan and Isolde*, the *magnum opus* of his God, that he ascends to the celestial altitudes where he reaps an abundance of the special beatitudes appropriate to his greater occasion. When this particular kind of an upward movement comes over him he lets himself go—wings, inkpot, and the whole beatitude outfit, and the world is then treated to an account of special soarings such as the celestials never scheduled in their wildest dreams.

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Sometimes this gentleman wastes a little of his time for the purpose of noting what to avoid in seeing performed some of the works of the older operatic composers. Upon the occasion of the performance of one of the old Italian operas, when Sembrich and Caruso were making a display of their rare qualities as *bel canto* singers, the critic of one of our "great metropolitan dailies" ventured to look in upon the audience, and, to his surprise, the house was filled to overflowing with seemingly happy people, ignorant of their shortcomings, who were showing indications of real pleasure. The next day there appeared in his column an account of the full house and his surprise at the joyous and satisfied expression of the audience while witnessing the performance of such an inferior and out-of-date composition. It was as evident as possible, from his point of view, that those miserable people, who did not know that they ought to be unhappy, had no right to enjoy themselves—in such a manner. They should have gone to an opera (?) to observe, to study, to calculate, and then go to their homes, get out the Euclids, their boxes of mathematical instruments, their logarithms, and metaphysical works, and set themselves to trying to find out what it

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all meant. This, according to the ardent disciples of the Wagnerian Cult, would afford the highest enjoyment to which the human understanding could attain.

It would be difficult to find either a man or woman, of reasonable culture, possessing a fair amount of knowledge of the theory and practice of music, who would assert that Richard Wagner was not a great master of his art-science. His high standing as a musician has become solidly historical. His methods and work were completely original, and the results to the human ear often repulsive and always difficult to comprehend; but, occasionally, when he indulges in lucid moments and condescends to open, not very wide, the gate to an exceptional musical paradise, we are treated to some rare examples of his calmer and better qualities, such as human beings who had not had the good fortune to be able to climb to his awful heights can appreciate and enjoy. These beauty spots, having charms all their own, come to us like some soothing spirit of sound, from out his dreary and oftentimes awful deserts of *outré* and unearthly noises, illustrating the wondrous power of a great genius and an accomplished artist; and make us wish he had cut loose from his

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singular theories and worked himself down to a level of artistic beauty that the uninitiated could understand.

Personally I feel that *Aïda* is about as far in the Wagnerian direction as any composer ought to venture. That composition is both understandable and enjoyable, and has never needed the strenuous efforts of intolerant partisans to maintain its meritorious position among the greater operatic compositions. It has neither the sweet tum-tum of the old Italian compositions nor the brain-worrying and tympanum-splitting of all that is dreary and repulsive in the Wagnerian masterpieces.

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IN the social world the question of manners for at least two centuries has been one of considerable importance; and, possibly, undue weight has been attached to their possession and too much condemnation bestowed for their absence; and for those reasons it may not be out of place to give the results of a brief inquiry into the origin of the word, its adoption into the English language, and its present signification. It is quite clear that its present acceptation and applications are in the main arbitrary, and the word has no well-defined, exact foundation in a root.

In 1425, Charles the VII. of France had for a Father Confessor an Augustine monk called *Jacques Le Grand*, who wrote for the instruction of the royal household a considerable series of short stories of purely moral and ennobling tendencies. They were written in Latin, and, in 1487, Caxton translated

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them into English, and issued an edition of them from his London press under the title of the *Book of Good Manners*. Here was a clear substitution for the word morals and, possibly, the first prominent instance of its false use in our language. After Caxton's translation there came several in French under the title of *Livre de bonne mœurs* which literally translated means the book of good morals.

Its present application, and possibly its existence, is probably due to the use made of it by the early English translators of the Old and New Testaments. The earliest English editions have not been examined, but the word is found so often in the King James version that we are inevitably led to the conclusion that it must have been used in its present sense by the earlier translators, probably by Wyclif in 1360 and Tyndale and Coverdale in 1535. In 1611 was issued the King James version, and in it we find frequent use of the word in its present sense. The better known instance is to be found in Cor. 1, xv: "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Here, undoubtedly, we have an arbitrary application of a comparatively new word; and, until convinced to the contrary, we are compelled to believe that

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morals are more corrupted by evil communications than manners.

It may be said that, during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, it was fairly incorporated into our language, and became, by the poets and other writers, an acknowledged part of it. Since then several authors have maintained that it means minor morals and nothing more.

The French have the word *moeurs*, which with them stands for manners, morals, habits; and when they say *sans mœurs* they mean unprincipled; but custom has made the word apply to a nation or other unit of population rather than to persons. When the French say "*Les bonnes manières*" they convey the idea, if applied to a person, that he is polite, of pleasant ways, of good demeanor, that he has done something pleasant, is civil, polished, or that he is charming of speech. This phrase, like many others in the French language, is elastic, and can be stretched in many directions. In several other modern languages they have the equivalent with substantially the same applications.

An exhaustive investigation would undoubtedly prove that the now generally accepted meaning and application of the

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word manners grew out of a loose conception of an expression intended to stand for morals; and, gradually, we have come to accept an outward show of artificial manifestations, bowings, and scrapings, so to speak, or, as the French better express it, "*La politesse du chapeau*," for something very much beyond their real value. Morality is a reality—a well defined quality—while manners are but shadows, standing as much for real manhood as the posings of a charlatan, and no more. But the worst of it is we do not possess the much prized shadow: as a rule we rest our claims to social superiority upon the unsupported fact of a bank account. We assume, and quite correctly, from an American standpoint, that all things and qualities can be purchased with a cheque, or, in other words, millionnaires can go to a society exchange, give an order for a certain style or grade of social position, and pay for it on delivery.

Plain John Tadpole of to-day, floundering about in his little pool in search of his daily necessities, by a fortunate accident becomes the mighty millionaire bull-frog of to-morrow, and then commence the real troubles of the frog family. The puffing up and expanding out to fill new conditions; the

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creation or the reconstruction of a visiting-list; who to put on and who to leave off; the selection of a coat-of-arms; whether to join the rather high church of St. Vanitas or that of the Holy something else, and, among other items, a new set of manners are taken on, which are often as ill-fitting and unbecoming as the habitual overdressing of our new recruits to the national peerage. When thus armed and duly equipped, then comes the greater struggle of all—often Napoleonic in its conception and execution—the how to get in. That's the question! The tactical taking up of arms against a world of kicks and snubs from those fortunates who guard the entrance to plutocracy's paradise.

By careful observation of these struggles, beholders may see how much easier it is for the average man to stand up heroically against a whole deluge of adversity than to float easily and gracefully upon the topmost crest of the wave of prosperity.

This description stands for a numerous and all-powerful class which has fairly deluged our social surface since 1861. At that time commenced the departure from the quiet old ways to the ostentatious new which now prevail. Corruptly obtained land-grants by

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the millions of acres, the potent stock-watering-pot in the hands of railroad managers, the extortionate trusts, successful stock-sharpers, and unprecedented success in manufacturing and mercantile affairs over the whole country, have contributed their full share to our social disorders. From out this mass of raw human material, grown wealthy by the means described, we have manufactured a sort of tailor-made mock-duke aristocracy which we would pass off upon the world for the real article. It resembles an ideal and well-bred aristocracy about as much as one of its anise-seed bag chases does a real hunt. All that money could do has been done; but even the power of the million must stop somewhere. It can neither purchase good-breeding nor refinement; and yet there are still a small number of over-particular people who are so unreasonable as to find fault with present American fashions in manners. We forget that it has taken several of the prominent European nations many centuries to plant and grow to flower an aristocracy, and, even with the most patient care and steady soil-enriching, the favored plant has often failed to mature. It is a well-known fact that the English snob and cad is as often of noble birth as any

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other, and that the towering uniformed German brute is usually from the top range of Teutonic nobility. Our aristocracy, however, has produced an article which possesses the offensive qualities of these, to which may be added an appearance of idiocy which those described do not possess. The American "dude" stands alone, and, so far as we know, there is nothing like him under the sun; nor do we know what the word means, but when we see the thing we feel its value and realize its real significance.

Those outside of the assumed-to-be upper strata of our local social system several years ago experienced a genuine sensation. Before, an occasional side-light had been let in upon their occupations, and just enough seen to whet the appetite for more, and it was soon gratified by having the front door thrown wide open and the full light of the midday sun let in upon the gilded mysteries. The high-priest of fashion wrote a book! That great man published for the enlightenment of the world a veritable history recounting the doings, as seen by him, in Mammon's paradise. What a dull place was pictured! Millinery pertaining to the adornment of both sexes and *menus* were our only discoveries. In other words, the mantua-maker

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and larder dominate, and are never permitted to leave the sight. His scores of dull pages exalt only the commonplace, and he attempts to foist into a position of permanent prominence a concrete mass composed of indescribable nonentities. Through the whole of this discouraging narration we search in vain for a brilliant sally of wit, a bright repartee, a sensible saying, an account of a kind act, a gentle expression of human sympathy, or the record of one useful deed done, and we put the book down with the conviction that those of whom it treats are almost incapable of a noble act or a saying worth remembering. Such a weak laudation of ostentatious vanity was never before printed, and there can be no excuse for its existence save one, and that is, it will serve as a warning in teaching us what to avoid.

It may be asked what has all this to do with American morals and manners; the answer is—very much. But, before we can fully feel the force of the connection, we must consider the word “morals” in its higher and more comprehensive sense, and not in its limited application as standing only for the opposite of vice. Morality, broadly stated, means avoiding the wrong and doing right, and it is because the laws of morality and of

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common honesty have been so often openly and defiantly violated by many of the individuals who occupy prominent positions, and are supposed to be high up socially, that our manners are out of joint. For I hold it to be a truism that the better the man the better the manners. The thoroughly honest man may not be an adept in the little qualities, the small talk, and smirks which go so far toward the making of the regulation society manners; but he has a heartiness of speech, a perfect regard for the rights of others, and a manly frankness of demeanor toward all, high and low—which are the attributes of true nobility.

Society manners, pure and simple, are not necessarily sincere, but very often, and in the main, are insincere and may have behind them no morals, and, in many instances, are but the blowing of a little trumpet to advertise a shadow when the substance is wanting.

Lord Dunraven, after spending several months with our rough characters on the frontier, said he believed that the only chivalry left in the world was to be found in our far West. This remark would lead us to infer that he placed manliness and reckless courage above the superficial qualities which are so

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abundant in the so-called upper circles of fashionable society.

Sir Philip Sidney, suffering on the battlefield from a mortal wound, called for a drink of water, and, on receiving it, seeing a wounded soldier nearby, without touching the cup to his lips, handed it to the soldier, saying: "Thy necessity is greater than mine." That was the act of a heroic, honest, and unselfish man. Lord Chesterfield, the selfishly-worldly man of artificial manners, would have emptied the cup himself and justified the act with the assumption that his life was more worth saving than that of a private soldier.

In France, in the real upper class, the *haute noblesse*, there is a hold-over clinging to a mixture of the grandiose and formal manners of the Louis XIV. period. The lofty austerity of its style has, to an extent, been neutralized by the influence of the later democratic spirit; but there is enough left of the old elegance and well-bred reserve to season social intercourse with unusual attractiveness. When among these people, we are always sure of meeting with perfect demeanor and of hearing the language of the well-bred, who are so sure of their social position that they can afford to be well mannered towards

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all with whom they may come in contact, no matter how high up or low down in the social scale they may happen to be. But to-day in all France it is doubtful if we could succeed in finding a commanding officer, as at Fontenoy in 1745, who would insist that the officer in command of the enemy's forces should give the first order to fire. And yet only back in the eighteen hundred and eighties there was witnessed at the Monte Carlo railway station an extreme illustration of the ancient spirit of French politeness. Two passed-middle-age Frenchmen were seen to be engaged in such a warm and animated, but completely gentlemanly, discussion about which should enter the railway carriage first, that the train moved out of the station without their noticing it and left them still arguing the question of precedence. An English spectator, who had witnessed the scene, said to an American present: "Did you ever see such an idiotic performance?" "Perhaps;" answered the American, "but, all the same, only Frenchmen could be engaged in such a contest."

Speaking after the manner of the world; i. e., admitting our national want of manners is to acknowledge that our civilization is not what it ought to be. There is no doubt

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about our having a sort of civilization quite our own. That it is crude and unsatisfactory there can be no doubt; and, from one end of the country to the other, it exists, at its best, only in patches. No better illustration of this proposition could be cited than New York City, where, through the centre, there is a streak with fairly well built showy houses, with a few parts of streets passably clean, while, on either side, not far away, there are others most filthy and lined with rickety tenements swarming with vicious and unclean population.

The national shams, also, have their influence, such as sham architecture, with its sham walls; sham ornamentation, worse than barbaric; the sham shanty death-trap hotels; sham Christianity, which professes one thing and does another; sham literature, filled with vicious tendencies and promoting false notions of morals; shams in art; shams in the administration of hundreds of thousands of pages of incongruous, ill-digested and needless laws, and sham ways of living for keeping up appearances. Add to these shortcomings a perversion for selfish ends of the entire list of political functions, and we have a not much overdrawn picture of present conditions.

The national trend is chiefly in one direc-

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tion: to succeed in the fierce race for money seems to be our one great object of existence. And there are reasons for this national scramble more than appear upon the surface. It is not given to many men to compose immortal poems, to paint great pictures, to make important discoveries in science, or to write works which will carry their names to posterity. But wealth is possible. And in the field of commerce, finance, and speculation, the great contest is fought for the means with which to purchase, at least, notoriety and a certain sort of so-called social position. If, in this heated struggle, men lose the little gentleness and nobility of character with which nature has endowed them and the women become selfishly adamant, we must not be disappointed. They are the results to be expected. After the struggle, and the first million, come new conditions and the often futile attempts to level up; and in many instances its possession may be compared to a child's first rattle: it is apt to make a great deal of offensive noise. With coming age, possibly, something in the right direction may be accomplished; but that something will be of very slow growth unless we can arouse, and vitalize into an effective force, sufficient strength of purpose to

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completely reform present political methods.

A purification in that direction and a return to honest methods, would clear the whole atmosphere and make improvements in social affairs possible. Less national vanity, less personal conceit, and less sharpness in the business affairs of life, are also conditions precedent which must obtain before we can expect a healthier state of social intercourse; and, above all, let us remember that great financial success does not carry with it the exclusive right to monopolize all the ill breeding, arrogance and ostentation in the world.

In writing of this subject I have aimed chiefly at one class, and for the reason that that particular class has assumed, at least by indirection and the prominence their wealth gives them, to be the leaders in our national social world, and for its shortcomings the greater part of the blame must rest upon their shoulders.

Our conservative people, engaged in legitimate commercial pursuits and other occupations, who never become millionnaires, have no general code by which to regulate their social intercourse; but, as a rule, they show the better breeding of the two classes. A Metropolitan Opera House audience is an apt

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illustration of this proposition. The boisterous laugh and loud conversation are never heard in the gallery or the pit, but always in the boxes; annoying an audience by noisy demonstrations is only one of the exceptional methods employed by a certain class to advertise its existence to the outside world.

Personally, I wish the word manners might be expunged from our dictionaries. It covers more sins than any other in our language, and, in the world's social exchange, gives currency to an enormous amount of spurious coin. In presence of manners we ask no questions about morals, and so long as the required varnish appears upon the surface, we condone the probable shams it may cover.

With the old French aristocracy originated the glorious saying of "*noblesse oblige*." Let us recommend its careful study to our would-be nobility. Possibly a fair comprehension of its value might soften the rudeness of their pretensions.

It may be set down as a vital principle in our common-sense philosophy, that a fine upright character finds for itself a fitting outward expression, generally accompanied by a charm of demeanor quite unconscious of

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self—a demeanor which cannot be taught in schools or acquired by contact with others.

My theory is a very simple one. Let individuals cultivate noble thinking and doing, charity for the mistakes, misfortunes, and short-comings of others and kindness for all, and then, if they keep their accounts square with the higher moralities, their manners will take care of themselves.



